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DEX: _____
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LDX _____ PAGES 1

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RELEASED BY: DH

TOR: 210

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Tohak 90
Deliver Opening of Business

2-3

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LAOS 6-30

EDITOR'S NOTE: NORTH VIETNAM HAS NEVER ADMITTED IT HAS TROOPS IN THE INDOCHINA KINGDOM OF LAOS. UPI CORRESPONDENT PON CHANTARAJ WENT TO THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREA AND MET WITH NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS WHO SAID THEY WOULD STAY UNTIL THE AMERICANS LEAVE SOUTHEAST ASIA. HERE IS HIS REPORT.

BY PON CHANTARAJ

PAK NAM KA DING, LAOS (UPI) -- ANY DOUBT THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS REMAIN IN LAOS DESPITE PROVISIONS OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT ARE DISPELLED BY THEIR OBVIOUS PRESENCE IN THIS SMALL VILLAGE ON THE CEASE-FIRE LINE.

NO LOCAL PATHET LAO GUERRILLAS ARE PRESENT HERE, ABOUT 100 MILES EAST OF VIENTIANE. INSTEAD, A SMALL GARRISON OF ABOUT 12 NORTH VIETNAMESE GUARDS THE DEMARCATION LINE OF COMMUNIST TERRITORY.

I SPOKE WITH THEM FRIDAY IN AN OFTEN TENSE BUT FRANK MEETING. THEY OPENLY ADMITTED WHO THEY WERE AND SAID MORE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE STATIONED NEARBY.

THEY ALSO SAID THEY EXPECT TO BE ON LAOTIAN SOIL INDEFINITELY -- UNTIL NORTH VIETNAM HAS ACHIEVED ITS AIM OF SEEING THE END OF AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

THREE OTHER LAOTIAN JOURNALISTS, TWO VIENTIANE GOVERNMENT MILITARY OFFICERS AND MYSELF TRAVELED TO PAK NAM KA DING, WHERE THE COMMUNISTS SPLIT THE COUNTRY IN TWO AND PUSHED AL THE WAY TO THE THAILAND BORDER BEFORE THE FEBRUARY 1973 CEASE-FIRE WENT INTO EFFECT.

THE DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNIST TERRITORY IS AT THE NAN KA DING RIVER, WHERE IT FLOWS INTO THE MUKONG RIVER.

VILLAGERS MOVE FREELY BACK AND FORTH TO DO THEIR MARKETING, AND IT WAS EASY FOR US TO CROSS TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RIVER.

WE DID NOT DISCLOSE OUR REAL IDENTITY AND TOLD THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WE WERE TRAVELERS LOOKING FOR RELATIVES AMONG THE PATHET LAO, BUT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT AS STRANGERS THEY DID NOT TRUST US.

AS WE CROSSED THE RIVER IN A SMALL BOAT, A GREEN-UNIFORMED GUARD WITH A CHINESE AK47 ASSAULT RIFLE CALLED OUT IN VIETNAMESE, AND TWO OF HIS COMRADES RAN UP. WE WERE TAKEN TO THE BIGGEST OF THE APPROXIMATELY 10 HUTS THAT MAKE UP THIS VILLAGE.

WE WERE INTRODUCED TO THE COMMANDER OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS "ONG BIET" (ONG MEANS MR. IN VIETNAMESE). HE WOULD NOT LET US GO ANY FURTHER WITHOUT AN OFFICIAL PASS BUT WAS WILLING TO TALK POLITICS IN HIS BROKEN LAOTIAN.

THE LAOS PEACE AGREEMENT PROVIDED THAT ALL FOREIGN FORCES WERE TO HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY BY JUNE 4, 60 DAYS AFTER THE NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED IN VIENTIANE. BUT BIET SAID "WE WILL NOT WITHDRAW AS LONG AS AMERICANS ARE STILL IN LAOS AND STILL IN THAILAND."

"FIRST WE EXPELLED THE FRENCH COLONIALS, AND NOW WE ARE EXPELLING THE AMERICANS."

U.S. SPOKESMEN SAY THAT ALL AMERICAN MILITARY ADVISERS AND IRREGULAR TROOPS FROM THAILAND WERE REMOVED BEFORE THE JUNE DEADLINE WHILE AN ESTIMATED 30,000 TO 50,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS REMAIN IN LAOS.

BIET SAID THAT MANY AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE STILL "CAMOUFLAGED" IN VIENTIANE.

"OUR MISSION IS TO DEFEAT AND DRIVE THE AMERICANS OUT OF INDOCHINA AS WELL AS TO STAY ON UNTIL U.S. AIRBASES IN THAILAND ARE VACATED," HE SAID.

BIET, WHO SAID HE WAS 25 YEARS OLD AND HAD A WIFE AND THREE-YEAR-OLD CHILD IN NORTH VIETNAM, WAS OBVIOUSLY NERVOUS AND CONSTANTLY TAPPED HIS FOOT AND CLENCHED HIS RIFLE AS HE SPOKE.

ONCE OR TWICE, WHEN THERE WAS A SUDDEN NOISE OUTSIDE, HE STIFFENED AND BROUGHT HIS WEAPON TO THE READY.

WE HAD AN ESPECIALLY BAD MOMENT WHEN A GOVERNMENT HELICOPTER LANDED AT THE VIENTIANE GARRISON ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE RIVER, ABOUT 300 METERS AWAY. BIET'S SOLDIERS GRABBED A SMALL ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILE THAT CAN BE FIRED FROM THE SHOULDER AND SCRAMBLED OUTSIDE. THEY MUST HAVE THOUGHT WE HAD BAILED THEM INTO A TRAP.

TO EASE THE TENSION, I ASKED IF I COULD HAVE A PUFF ON A PIPE THAT ONE OF THE YOUNG NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD BEEN SMOKING.

I GAGGED, COUGHED AND THE SOLDIER LAUGHED. "VIETNAMESE RED TOBACCO IS DANGEROUSER THAN THE LAOTIAN KIND," HE SAID.

HE SAID HE WAS 19 YEARS OLD AND HAD BEEN IN THE ARMY IN LAOS EVER SINCE LEAVING SCHOOL IN NORTH VIETNAM THREE YEARS AGO.

BIET SILENCED HIS YOUNGER COMRADE IN VIETNAMESE WHEN HE GOT TOO FRIENDLY. THE OLDER SOLDIER PREFERRED TO TALK IN IDEOLOGICAL TERMS.

"THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS SOUTH VIETNAM AND NORTH VIETNAM," HE SAID. "THERE IS ONLY ONE VIETNAM. THERE ARE 40 MILLION VIETNAMESE PEOPLE, AND WE ARE FIGHTING 200 MILLION AMERICANS."

"IF THEY HAD NOT SIGNED THE CEASE-FIRE, WE WOULD HAVE GONE ALL THE WAY TO VIENTIANE."

WHEN WE LEFT TO CROSS BACK TO THE GOVERNMENT SIDE, BIET ESCORTED US TO THE RIVERBANK AND SHOOK HANDS FORMALLY WITH EACH OF US.

"SEE YOU AGAIN," HE SAID VERY SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY. HIS MANNER MADE ME UNCOMFORTABLE. I DIDN'T FEEL BETTER UNTIL THE BOAT REACHED THE OPPOSITE BANK.

ABOVE IS A REPEAT TO 8 WIRE POINTS

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